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"The Woman in Red"—Unmasked!

The Black Cat

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MARCH

The Race Across the Continent.
Paul Shoup.

Unmasked.
(Sequel to "The Woman in Red.")
Muriel Campbell Dyar.

A Latter-Day Miracle.
Frank J. Stillman.

The Scientific Circle.
C. C. Newkirk.

Missouri.
A. W. Whitehouse.

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The Black Cat

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The Race Across the Continent.*

BY PAUL SHOUP.

IN Mesquite City, Colorado, Colonel Jack Simmons still avers stoutly that Ranchman Jim Somers was simply an ignorant, obstinate whacker of steers, determined because of his distrust to transact business only with the apex of the pyramid; but this claim, though strongly to the point, is earnestly disputed by Carollin' Jones, of North Fork, Carollin' claiming that Somers was from Wall Street, New York, U. S. A., where he had been employed as a baiter of bears, but, the occupation telling upon him, had retired to the foothills of the Rockies to indulge in the pastime of nothing, and to regain some lost health that had strayed away on the eastern range during some hard seasons. Mesquite City (and North America as well) is divided in opinion, many good citizens planting themselves at one point of view and as many more at the other.

It is well, therefore, that the truth should be out; though this we all know — Ranchman Jim Somers was the cause, or perhaps I should say the motive power, of the famous Race across the Continent.

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Nowadays, when it is said that two parallel lines are straight, anyone, except an instructor in geometry, knows that reference is made to railroads. If these parallel straight lines are crossed by a third straight line, no Euclid is needed to demonstrate that there will be trouble, especially if the crossing be at a grade. But a really difficult problem is presented when two railroads, parallel, and remaining straight, as railroads always do, nevertheless begin to converge toward the same pass in the mountains. So it happened that the little town of Mesquite City, which the atlas of last year calmly ignores, suddenly became the central point in a drama in which all America was interested.

The Chicago, Denver & Pacific Railroad, better known by its folder name, the Denver Road, and the St. Louis & Los Angeles Railway, which hall-marks its advertising "Los Angeles Air Line," parallel each other west from the bluff timber of the Missouri to the sunset shadows of the Rockies. Treeless, flat, with scarcely sufficient indigenous vegetation to ambush a coyote, through this partly untenanted plain, roar windlike the trains of the two lines, their smoke trails stretching impressively across the sky.

Forty miles west of the Kansas-Missouri State line, the roads are but fifteen miles apart, and practically this distance is maintained until, at Splitiron Junction, the Los Angeles line turns to the south, and slightly farther west the Denver Road's main artery seeks a northwest passage. From each junction, however, a branch line keeps to the trail of the Star of Empire with the faithfulness of a parallel of latitude.

The race that set the world to watching had its inception when these hitherto insignificant branches began to converge toward Moonstone Cañon, which is the mouth of the only pass through the Rockies in that section of the country.

The Denver Road had completed its branch to Mesquite City, ten miles from the mouth of the cañon, and was sleeping on its advantage, for its rival had not yet entered that cow-country metropolis, being afflicted with three receivers just as it arrived at a point a few miles farther east.

Rumors came down through Moonstone Cañon, borne by orders for blasting powder, fire-water and pork and beans, of great strikes

in the mines over the summit; and still farther west a land syndicate was building mountain reservoirs, planting town sites and acreage, and speaking to the public of wealth to come through full-page engravings of heavily-laden fruit orchards. Of these things the First Vice-President of the Denver Road knew nothing, for he was in Europe recuperating from a raging war with a falling bond market. The President was in Egypt or Japan, I do not remember which, nor is it important, for he was best known as a connoisseur of foreign wines and a relater of remarkable tales of travel.

The Los Angeles Air Line woke up with a start — and that start was towards Moonstone Cañon. The receivers disappeared and then, with prosperity-titles attached, came to the surface again as officials of the line. The old bonds were replaced with beautifully engraved new ones. Long lines of seventy-five-pound steel rails began to creep toward Mesquite City. In that metropolis a mass meeting and barbecue were held, and there was much speech-making by imported and local orators concerning the benefit to a community of a rival railroad.

The day that the Second Vice-President of the Los Angeles Air Line signed smilingly a voucher for the expenses of the barbecue, the First Vice-President of the rival corporation set foot ashore from the Ceramic. On that day, too, Mesquite City listened to the tooting of a strange whistle, for a construction train had arrived over the new line. The spider was spinning its web as it went.

At noon that day, on the stock exchange, where brokers were lazily discussing the weather, in Mesquite City, whence the solitary daily-except-Sunday passenger train had gone, in the office of the First Vice-President, who sat down unwillingly before a pyramid of letters and a dozen telegrams, some outspoken and a few in cipher, the Denver Road was apparently napping as serenely as ever; and yet at the terminus of the rival line was a long column of red-shirted, bare-armed men, swinging shovels close on the heels of "the cavalry of the army" — forty teams that pulled and wheeled and backed to the orders of strident-voiced drivers, reins about the neck and gripping hard the handles of scrapers. At the rear was the construction train with its engine grumbling im-

patiently, the layers of steel rails following hard upon the distributors of the criss-cross piles of ties along the right-of-way. Moonstone Cañon was but nine miles away.

At three o'clock in the afternoon observant brokers noted a movement in Denver Road stock; in the office of the First Vice-President there were skurrying footsteps, ringing annunciators, low-voiced consultations and the whir of typewriters apparently after records. In Mesquite City the agent was wondering if he had not better take a nap in the absence of other time-killers, when he was aroused by what he afterward termed a "thunder-storm along the wire." When he slowly responded to the clicking "MC-MC-MC," he was mildly surprised at the terse instructions of the dispatcher not to go out of hearing of the sounder until further orders, neither to eat nor drink nor even to receive freight. He opened his eyes wider a little later when he heard an order come over the wire giving absolute right of way over everything to an engine running light from division headquarters with the division superintendent and a right-of-way agent on board. At the same time a rolling mill in Pittsburg received an inquiry as to the least possible time in which could be delivered an order for steel rails — fifty miles of main line and twenty miles of spurs and siding. At 7.30 P. M. the agent at Mesquite City gave up supper in despair and went on copying confidential telegrams from New York about rights-of-way, or clicking the meanings of scrawls on yellow paper to division headquarters two hundred miles away, there to be picked up by another electric current and flashed on their way eastward.

At nine o'clock that evening a cow-puncher leaped from the back of a perspiring pony in front of Ranchman Somers' cabin in Moonstone Cañon. After a day on the range, the ranchman was sitting on his doorstep smoking, enjoying the freedom of the night and old clothes. Below him was a vast moonlit plain, darkened in ragged spots with the shadows of isolated clouds.

It was perhaps as easy to measure Somers from external appearance in the semi-darkness as in broad daylight; his neighbors found it so. A slender man with a penchant for loose-fitting togs and an old pipe, and not beyond middle age, his face had in it written the history of battles of giants and some traces of ill-

health; his eyes were deep-set, with humorous lines radiating from the corners; his nose was aquiline, and below the sensitive mouth was an assertive chin backed by an aggressive jaw; he would not have passed unnoticed in a crowd. He arose and nodded to the newcomer as if he were expected, somewhat surprising if true, for in the last four hours Somers had received more callers than during all the three years previous that he had lived in the cañon, including the recent semi-weekly visits from the right-of-way agent of the Los Angeles Air Line, who discussed land values and made offers to Somers as if he were a home-seeker deeply enamored of the ranch, which offers Somers quietly rejected. For Somers owned two thousand acres of land, including the entire mouth of Moonstone Cañon.

During the evening he had derived some amusement from what the foreman termed "a percession of citizens on hoss-back an' in kerridges," including railway superintendents and right-of-way men, prominent townspeople of Mesquite and several message carriers.

Somers tore open the yellow railroad envelope and lit a match. It was from the First Vice-President of the Denver Road.

30 DH filed 5.02 p. m., rush via K Cy & company wire — NEW YORK, 7-6-99.

JIM SOMERS,
Moonstone Ranch, via Mesquite Cy, Col.

So you are holding fort. Capitulate your own terms for sake auld lang syne. Wall Street's a joke but this is serious. Like a race with your own horse up.

GEORGE.

Somers slowly folded the message and looked out over the prairie. The message had taken him back to boyhood days when he and that same vice-president had gone swimming together, carved the same desk at school with their knives, enjoyed the measles simultaneously and found strength in union when either got into trouble.

Up from the shadow of the scrub oaks came another horse and rider. The foreman of the gang of scrapers slid from the bare back of a horse taken from the traces, and handed Somers an

envelope. It, too, was yellow. "A telegram, sir," said the newcomer, quietly.

21 DH filed 5.07 p. m. NEW YORK, 7-6-99.
via St. Louis & co wire, rush
JAS. SOMERS,
Mesquite City, Col.
Draw on me at sight for your price for Moonstone Ranch. In the summer of eighty-five bargains were quickly made.
G. P. D.

Somers turned the envelope over carefully, and gazed contemplatively at the bold "Los Angeles Air Line" inscribed across the top. He had heard from another Vice-President.

He remembered vaguely that the Second Vice-President of the Los Angeles Air Line had assisted his father by helping him hold up the market in the 'eighty-five crisis, but surely his father had repaid the favor, if favors can be repaid. Still, a generous spirit had been shown. On the other hand, a boyhood friendship held dear memories. Suddenly the spirit that had made his career in New York remarkable came to his rescue.

"Either would consider it fair — and we'll all enjoy the race," he said to himself. Then he pencilled two telegrams, the one the duplicate of the other. One was to the First Vice-President of the Denver Road, the other to the Second Vice-President of the Los Angeles Line. Thus they ran:

If Moonstone Ranch is worth having it is worth seeing. It's fit for a vice-president, and the first one who drops in shall have it. Am at this minute inviting two. Dinner will be ready.

He folded the two messages and stepped forward.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there is one thing that will make these messages valuable — haste."

The foreman of the scrapers, quick of comprehension, leaped on his horse's bare back, shouted and went thundering down the road. The other man stopped to mount, but was only a short moment behind. Somers went into the house, smiling.

The Race across the Continent was assured — a spectacular

battle between two master strategists on the field of commerce, with more than a nation on-looking.

The ranchman unlocked the door to the room that was his one absolutely private apartment in the cabin — a bit of the past that he had brought with him. Here were an old and well-beloved roller-top desk, a table with the latest financial and political journals scattered over it, a well-filled book-case, with the Rubaiyat in the upper left hand corner and Poor's Manual in the lower right hand corner. On a stand was a telephone with phonograph attachment, whence ran a line along the top of a stock fence to the county seat, forty miles distant. He could call up the Missouri River, Galveston or St. Louis; or lie back in an easy chair and have the phonograph tell him of the day's doings in New York or London, or listen to the latest opera in Omaha. He would have no trouble in following the race to the Rockies.

The shadows were but half dispelled in the great trunk line round house by a hundred twinkling incandescent lights. The night was clear and beautiful, and across the water the stars were seemingly reflected in New York. The foreman came into the building reluctantly. A caller ran toward him, shouting, and he hastened his steps. He lifted the telephone receiver to his ear and was surprised to hear the voice of the Superintendent of Motive Power and Machinery.

"What's the fastest engine in?"

"1367 — the hostler has just finished with her."

"All right — have ready in thirty minutes to take out special; send down to yard, where Webb will take charge. Have fit for the run of her life."

It was 11.30 P. M., Eastern time, and at that moment a wiper in a round house over in the metropolis was being vigorously "jacked-up" for not using more haste with Engine No. 1111; for there was another special to be run that night, and along two great arteries of commerce were flying terse and vigorous messages about rights of specials, passing points and elastic schedules.

Through friendly eastern connections the two messages were already beginning to bear fruit.

These plays on the chess-board were swift, but silent; everywhere was secrecy imperatively commanded, yet, at 3 A. M. an

order was shouted through the speaking tube to the press room of a great New York daily to hold the first edition for important railroad news. Next morning New York awoke and read in staring headlines of the beginning of the race.

That the midnight departures on specials of two high officers of the Denver Road and the Los Angeles Line had something to do with the right-of-way war at the foot of the Rockies was quickly guessed. But what? Bonds and stocks in an already feverish market behaved most erratically, and on the floor of the Exchange Wall Street brokers danced as bears or bellowed as bulls.

As yet the public was but mildly interested and discussed the subject placidly over the after-dinner coffee. The evening journals were more eagerly scanned. The very latest editions of the Chicago papers showed that so far there was little advantage either way. It was apparent, however, that all records both for the trip and shorter runs between New York and Chicago would be broken. The windows on the heights were yet brilliant with the evening sun when the yard rails in Chicago quivered under the specials; and twilight was still lingering while they sped swiftly down into the western darkness. As late as midnight lantern-lighted crowds gathered even at the small stations and watched them go by. The continent went to bed late.

Over night the interest grew, and the next morning, away down in the little plains towns of western Texas, and up along the Canadian border, and far up in the woods of Maine, good citizens went out in their shirt sleeves before breakfast to search dewy lawns for local four-page dailies to find out "how that race was comin' on." In the cities the morning dailies gave over two or more columns on the first page, illustrated from "latest photographs," to the race. Business men breakfasted with their papers propped up before them. At luncheon, when the trains were far west of the Missouri, they were asking each other if "they had begun to issue extras yet." The goal was but a few hours distant, yet none could say, reading the reports, that the one special or the other held the advantage. There was no trickery, for every employé, from the track-walker to the Superintendent of Lines, west of the Missouri river felt that the honor of the road was at stake; the race was to be won fairly or lost honorably. No suspi-

cion attached to the Denver Road when a grain wagon was stalled on a road crossing at a grade just out of Topeka, delaying the other line's special three minutes. The driver fled for his life while the angry train crew in unloading the wagon wrecked both it and its contents.

Superintendents of divisions sat at the elbows of chief operators, who, greater than Ajax, not only defied but controlled lightning, and with steady precision hurled messages along the wires. Master mechanics donned overalls and jumpers and crawled beneath impatient, throbbing locomotives that waited just inside yard limits. Roadmasters on three-wheelers anxiously rode up and down their divisions, inspecting every rail, while for five hundred miles the section men were scattered, a long line of guards, with the foremen as officers. Up in the general offices the clerks neglected important work, and the general superintendents, who received reports from the stations as the specials passed, were targets for inquiries by telephone and messenger from the other heads of departments. Out on the road operators kept one finger on the key and grimly turned a deaf ear to all questions.

In the larger cities crowds surged about the bulletin boards of the newspapers. Type-setting machines were kept waiting, melting hot for the finish. On 'Change pandemonium asserted its divine right, for the magnitude of the prize at stake was now fully understood — individuals were swallowed up in an angry roar of voices and a turbulent sea of arms, hats and heads.

. . . . . .

Red Brush, a hundred miles east of Mesquite City, is not without importance, in the opinion of its inhabitants, and on this particular day, though the world with its eyes on the other metropolis overlooked it, was not entirely without excitement. Mesquite City might be the goal of a railroad race, but Red Brush had Blossen Bros.' Great Three-Ring Circus and Colossal Menagerie, and still held up its head proudly. The exhibition grounds adjoined the railroad right-of-way, and now, at one o'clock, the Denver Road special being almost due, it was decided to postpone the grand balloon ascension until after it had passed.

In the yard there was haste and confusion. In order to clear the special a live-stock extra must side-track here, and though the

dispatcher had correctly calculated that the two sidings would accommodate both the circus train and the extra, he did not foresee the necessity for reswitching the circus cars. So when the elephant cars and the hippopotamus heavy tank car were again on the main line, ready to be kicked into place on the near siding, the conductor in charge breathed a sigh of relief; he had at least ten minutes to spare.

A faint tremor ran along the eighty-pound steel rails. The special was coming. Every moment the image of the great ten-wheeler, with her little funnel set high on the big body, heaving torrents of smoke into the sky, grew larger and larger. As she went by the spinning six-foot drivers were blurred discs. Up in the cab, old John Stevens, with lips closed in a horizontal line and with eyes straight ahead, felt her respond to the very touch of the hand on the lever. The fireman, stripped to the waist, was throwing coal into the gaping furnace with immense energy.

Back in the private car "Esmeralda," the First Vice-President sat, playing chess with his Secretary. The First Vice-President was the image of imperturbability. His skull cap was drawn down carefully over the little hair remaining above his temples. His high forehead was uncreased and his deep-set blue eyes fathomless. There was no trace of agitation about the firm mouth, with its somewhat pendulous lower lip; the aggressive lower jaw, which even the double chin could not altogether hide, had the poise of confidence. He sat comfortably in his easy chair, though, like the locomotive ahead, he was possessed of an "extension front." The Secretary was a reflection of his impassability, only now and then he stole glances at the speed indicator, watched the telegraph poles that seemed almost to blend together, or gazed intently out across the prairie where, fifteen miles away and abreast, a wavering line of smoke lifted itself into the sky, for a moment, perhaps, hiding behind some knoll, only to break forth anew at another point — farther west.

It was an even race, this, with road-bed against road-bed, rolling stock against rolling stock and men against men.

The First Vice-President was studying the board, when the wheels began to grind. Air was being applied. He looked up and glanced at the Secretary from beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

"See what the trouble is, please," he said — and went on studying the board.

The special slackened its speed and then stopped. The white canvas of the circus, and the flags fluttering in the strong east breeze, could be seen. Strains of "Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes" floated in through the window.

Ten seconds later the Secretary came in, accompanied by a conductor, white and shaking, with great beads of perspiration standing on his face.

"It's the hippopotamus car, sir," he burst out. "She jumped the rail at the switch — wouldn't take the frog. We tried to drag her down the switch, but her weight's at the wrong end and now she's settin' sideways on the track. You see her flanges was wore thin an' —"

"Excuse me," said the First Vice-President, "is there any dynamite in town?"

The conductor threw up his hands.

"We thought of that — but they don't use it here. George 'phoned and sent messengers. There ain't a thing that'll blow her up."

The First Vice-President rose to his feet quickly. In a moment he was beside the derailed car. He glanced around comprehensively. "Three engines and all on the wrong side," he said reflectively. He examined the position of the car, looked intently at the stencilled weight, and then said to the conductor:

"You will need a wrecking outfit, I think. Better ask the superintendent for help." Then he put his hands back in his pockets, looked up, and said, "A circus in town, eh?"

But the Secretary, with despair in his heart, was watching a thin line of smoke across the southern sky — and far to the west.

The First Vice-President gazed at the white tent thoughtfully. The wind was driving striped peanut sacks and pieces of torn posters westward along the streets and across vacant lots; the captive balloon was tugging at the ropes. A hundred miles to the west rose the blue masses of the Rockies.

"Other folks besides aeronauts have their ups and downs, I've noticed," said a voice at his side.

The First Vice-President turned his head. The speaker was a

young man, fair, with twinkling eyes and a humorous mouth. He was plainly dressed, but as he spoke he opened his coat, as if carelessly, and revealed beneath the costume of an aeronaut. There was something in the tone of the remark that impressed the railroad official.

"Yes," said he, "and we all have a common consolation — when we are down we may still hope to go up again."

"By rising to the occasion," returned the aeronaut reflectively.

The First Vice-President drew his hands from his pockets, for a moment looked straight into the eyes of the balloonist, again turned his eyes to the balloon and called to his Secretary.

"Have the car at Mesquite City to-morrow at 4 P. M., where I will meet you. By the way, keep this crowd here a bit if you can; entertain 'em with a story — tell 'em about the trip — tell 'em anything — and if they take you for the First Vice-President who has lost the greatest race of the century, so much the better."

The Secretary mounted the car steps, almost hopefully; he had been with the First Vice-President for ten years and had not known him to fail on important occasions, yet surely now drowned honor were beyond the reach of fathom line. The crowd paid him close attention during his five minutes' speech, cheered him at the close and returned to the balloon ascension.

The First Vice-President and the aeronaut climbed through a broken-down fence and unobserved made their way to the tent.

"My stage name is Count Fallanoff, and I am the famous Russian aerialist touring the American continent for the first time," said the latter. "Yet, for all that, there is a dear girl in Cairo, Ill., waiting to marry me at the end of this season. I too am in trouble, for the cashier of a Chicago bank has just taken French leave and the bank's funds, and I cannot marry on nothing. With a profitless winter season staring me in the face, I am feeling much depressed. I must raise four hundred dollars with my balloon."

"How fast can you travel?" asked the First Vice-President with apparent irrelevance as they reached the guy ropes of the great gas bag.

"That depends on the wind — you can't go against it. You are bound westward, I take it?"

The answer was an emphatic nod.

The aeronaut pulled a light silk American flag from under his coat and held it up. It streamed straight out, due west.

"I have travelled ninety miles an hour and I believe I can do that in this gale.

"Good!" exclaimed the First Vice-President. "You need not postpone the wedding."

As the gentleman with the flaring diamond and the bassoon voice made his announcement of the ascension, the famous aeronaut swung himself upon the trapeze, and, hanging by his toes, waved a graceful farewell to the crowd. The freed balloon, caught by the breeze, soared upward.

Meanwhile the civilized world was waiting for news. Bulletins of the progress of the Denver Road special suddenly stopped, though every way station flashed back the passing time of its rival. Rumors of disaster were circulated, growing as they went. The officials of the Denver company declined to say anything, but it was not possible to conceal the disheartened air that pervaded the general offices. Then press dispatches brought the truth concerning the train, and Denver Road stock had a great slump.

. . . . . .

Somers stopped the phonograph and leaned back in his chair with a half-sigh. Possibly he was a little disappointed at the result.

"Too bad to spoil so good a race that way," he said to himself.

As he passed out through the door, he glanced upward. A balloon, rapidly falling, was coming from the east in gigantic descending curves. Its reckless downward swirl impressed him. At the same time he heard, away down the road, the thin piping of the whistle of an automobile. He sat down on the step. His smile returned.

A hundred yards down the hill, the balloon, making one last ineffectual effort to escape, was made captive by an anchor to a mountain oak, where it was held struggling. A rope ladder was uncoiled from the side of the basket, and down this with surprising rapidity came a familiar figure, a stout man with loosened waistcoat and a tall hat on the back of his head.

Even then Somers noted with amusement that a determined jaw was not hidden by a double chin.

The automobile was whistling at the last turn of the road.

The First Vice-President of the Denver Road adjusted his tie, dusted his hat and, avoiding the group of cacti, came up to the cottage.

"Good afternoon, Somers," he said, grasping the other's outstretched hand. "I was just going by and thought I'd drop in and accept your kind invitation. Incidentally, I'd like to buy your ranch — if no other purchaser has appeared." He looked about inquiringly. The automobile was coming through the orchard.

"The place is yours," said Somers.

The horseless machine snorted through the gate and stopped with a cough of relief. Another heavy gentlemen of rubicund appearance climbed ponderously down the step.

His expression never changed at the sight of the First Vice-President. If he were surprised he did not show it. He came up the path smilingly, giving as he went one comprehensive glance that took in earth and sky, and the balloon hitched to the tree-top. He reached out both hands to his friends.

"We are glad to see you," said the First Vice-President, pleasantly, "but we did not look for you quite so soon."

The other smiled. "I am a little late," he said. "I came up to see the balloon ascension," and then he added in a disappointed tone, "I believe, though, that there was no parachute jump."

Somers glanced at the automobile. "You should have hitched your wagon to a star. Come in, gentlemen. In view of my invitation, it is unnecessary to say that dinner is ready and covers are laid for three."

So it happened, paradoxically enough, that as the First Vice-President of the Denver Road went up the stock went down; but after he had made his descent the stock promptly rose again, and the metropolitan dailies late that evening contradicted in a second extra the news that appeared in the first.

Three weeks later, after a series of unparalleled transactions that threw the financial world into convulsions, the Denver Road and the Los Angeles Air Line were consolidated into one system, with the former's First Vice-President as chairman of the board and the latter's Second Vice-President as president of the new corporation.

Unmasked.*

(Sequel to "The Woman in Red")**

BY MURIEL CAMPBELL DYAR.

Y a strange twist of circumstances — call them coincidences if you will, or by another name if you can see relentless Purpose working through all things — I have lately, and almost simultaneously, come into possession of two remarkable revelations concerning the mystery of the Woman in Red — the heroine of that most astounding tragedy of Monte Carlo — and they supply the threads to lead a thoughtful mind either to its complete solution or, perhaps, to a still mistier labyrinth within the borderland between flesh and spirit.

My friend Dawson, going up and down the earth in search of health, had been induced to try the healing summer air of southern Arizona and thither we went. The day after our arrival at our destination it rained, with all the discomfort to tourists of wetness in a climate warranted dry. Dawson, in his querulous, invalid's humor, railed at the unpleasant weather as we paced back and forth on the sheltered veranda of the hotel, his fretful eyes on the muddy street and the drift of the fine, white rain.

"Always rain," he grumbled, "rain in London, rain in Paris, rain on the Rhine, rain in Rome, rain here, rain everywhere!"

"You forget," I said, "the Riviera."

"Ye-es," he admitted, "but that was two winters ago."

A girl passed by on the street just then, erect and graceful under her dripping umbrella. A gust of wind, blowing back the cape from her shoulders exposed its scarlet lining, which made a quick flash of color, in the dull, gray morning.

"Monte Carlo!" exclaimed Dawson, with a sudden, backward leap of memory.

"Mystery and masks, and the Scarlet Lady," I said in return.

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** "The Woman in Red" appeared in THE BLACK CAT for November, 1899.

It had come back to us both, at that flash of scarlet and my careless mention of the Riviera — the awful tragedy of the Woman in Red and the mystery surrounding it and her. We had worn the subject to threads in talking it over the first few months after we had left Monte Carlo, though it was certainly a fruitful subject: The strange appearance of the woman at the gambling resort; her caprice of color and her invariable mask; her success at the gambling table; the sudden disappearance of her young English lover and the well-authenticated rumor that he had lost his reason over the accidental sight of her face one night in the Casino gardens; her suicide immediately after; and, finally, the madness which had come upon the priest of Sainte Dévote, who had lifted the mask from her dead face at her request. But gradually the mystery had been crowded out of our minds by the new scenes and events of our travels and by the ever present anxiety for my friend's health, so that for over a year the subject had not been mentioned.

Now, in an instant, the old horror and fascination of it was upon me once more and I saw by the look in Dawson's eyes that it was so with him. I saw again the tall cliffs of Monaco, with the restless amethyst sea at their feet; the slender, curiously graceful figure in scarlet as it moved before us at Monte Carlo, in the flower-crowded streets and in the brilliant *salle de jeu* of the Casino, and I saw again the ugly stain darkening in the sun on the marble steps.

Without preface, Dawson took up the subject we had dropped so long ago.

"Jack, what in creation was behind that woman's mask?" he began argumentatively and with irritation.

"My dear Dawson," I answered wearily, "how should I know! Perhaps something outside the bounds of creation."

"I am sure she was the Devil," he said, after a pause, but without that emphasis which springs from conviction.

Then we took up the old theories about the matter, over which we had argued so often before. With a sick man's nervous fancy, Dawson insisted that a terrible deformity, or a disfiguring birthmark, or the signs of leprosy, if suddenly and unexpectedly revealed in the face of a human being, might, under certain condi-

tions, cause insanity. But I, arguing the question from the standpoint of vigorous health, was positive that, while such a revelation would undoubtedly be a shock, it could not, under any conditions, have so serious an effect on a sound mind. There were no special reasons for us to doubt the mental strength of the Englishman or of the priest, two men who had drifted together into the tragedy, apparently by the merest chance. Dawson grew cross over the puzzle and puffed his cigar vindictively.

"I wish I could get hold of that infernal old woman," he growled. "I'd get the truth out of her somehow."

A man with whom we had formed a slight acquaintance at the hotel now joined us, and the matter of the Woman in Red was dropped. I could see, however, by the wrathful crease in Dawson's forehead that he was thinking of it still.

His ill-humor over it lasted all day, even until the early dusk, and we went down to dinner. As he was then still taciturn, I amused myself by staring covertly at the people about me. There were the usual semi-invalids at a health resort and the usual curious tourists, eager over everything, from the February almond blossoms on the tables to the Arizona olives on the bill of fare. A little bored by the scene and not over-pleased with my dinner, I was about to rouse Dawson, when I noticed at the farther end of the table opposite us a big, fair, youngish man, half hidden from my view by a huge palm. His face was turned from me and I caught only the ruddy outline of its profile, shaded by abundant, light hair, noticeably gray. Then he turned and I saw his face.

"Dawson," I said, as quietly as I could, "Look!"

He glanced up in the direction I indicated.

"Oh, by jove, by jove!" he said softly under his breath.

It was the young Englishman of Monte Carlo!

I know that my face was flushed with excitement, and I heard the fork in Dawson's hand clatter sharply against his plate. Afterwards, in our room, we talked it over. Upon one thing we were agreed; we would ask the Englishman, point blank if need be, *what* was behind the mask of the Woman in Red. That he was the same boy, grown older more in looks than in years, whom we had seen at Monte Carlo was certain; that he was again in his right mind the circumstances attested, and that we must learn what he saw

that night in the gardens was, perhaps, the most absolutely certain thing in the world. We must know, even at the risk of unsettling his reason again by recalling the frightful incident. Dawson remarked grimly that it would be better to unsettle his than to lose ours, and delegated to me the task of bringing about an interview.

I bungled badly, but I managed it. Meeting him in the hotel lobby I claimed a previous acquaintance with him on the Continent, using glibly enough his name, which I had ascertained from the clerk. Being a gentleman and a slow-minded subject of Her Majesty, he did not disclaim me, and a quarter of an hour later he and Dawson and I sat together in our room, talking genially between the puffs of our cigars. We found topics of common interest in plenty and spent a pleasant hour chatting over our travels and the ranching possibilities of Arizona, in which the Englishman was evidently interested. Dawson began to grow uneasy and signalled to me to play trumps. Before I could think how to begin, the Englishman asked suddenly: "By the way, where did you say you ran across me?"

I had not said, but I did now, looking at him squarely:

"At Monte Carlo, two winters ago." The fine color left his face.

"You remember," I continued cruelly, "it was the winter of the Woman in Red sensation." He put up his hand to hide his trembling ashen lips.

"For heaven's sake, don't!" he cried. But there was no thought of *finesse* on our part. Dawson leaned forward, his eyes big with eagerness.

"*What*," he fairly shouted, "was behind that woman's mask?"

And this is the story we persuaded the Englishman to tell. He drew farther back into the shadows of the room as he told it, his hand going up now and then to cover his lips, which trembled in spite of him.

"You know the whole wretched affair, of course," he said, "if you were in Monte Carlo at the time. I wish I had not been! You saw how the Count and the Baron and I made fools of ourselves over the woman, I the most blatantly, without doubt. Heaven knows I could not help it, and I doubt if any man of my years and temperament could have done so. Whether it was partly the baffling mystery of her mask I do not know, but there

was a fascination about her that was irresistible. I begged her on my knees to let me see her face, begged her a dozen times a day, but she would only turn away with a bitter little laugh. The more she refused my request, the more convinced I became that she was beautiful and that her mask was only a caprice. I formed in my mind a face to fit her hair and her white hands and her charm altogether — a face so clear to me that, had I been an artist, I could have painted it. I was madly jealous of the suave old Count and the witless Baron, and they of me, but gradually I gained favor with her, until it was she and I who, as a rule, walked together and talked together and gamed together, I following her scarlet gown as if bewitched.

One night we left the Casino, where we had been playing, and went out into the gardens, away from the heat of the crowded rooms. Outside the moon made it as light as day. She was restless and nervous and would not sit down, so we walked to and fro on the terraces. The air was heavy with the scent of roses, and the moonlight was like wine. Half drunk with it and the gleam of her scarlet, I — oh, well, never mind what. I begged her again to take off her mask, and she answered lightly that she had not come out to talk of that. Angry at her refusal, I sulked like a child. She began listlessly slipping her ring up and down on her finger, and presently it slipped off and dropped to the ground. Before I could prevent her, she stooped to find it. A branch of a shrub caught in her hair and she drew back her head with a quick, nervous start to free it. I heard a little click, and her mask fell upon the gravel walk. Then I saw what I had longed so much to see."

Dawson sat up straight in his chair and my own pulse leaped.

"She was deformed, birth-marked, leprous — or the Devil!" broke in my friend.

The young Englishman drew farther back into the shadows.

"No," he answered nervelessly.

Dawson and I stared at each other, but something in the man's attitude kept us silent.

"There was a girl once at home in England," the shaking voice went on after a pause, "Margaret Allison, the daughter of a glover. I thought I loved her; at any rate, I told her so, for she

was pretty, confoundedly so, and I was a young fool. Then I found out my mistake. I remember — I shall never forget — how she looked and smiled at me when I told her I could not marry her. She — she killed herself, and I went to Monte Carlo and lost money to forget about it. Now, you may believe this or not, as you can, but when that woman's mask fell, I saw at first a Thing — not a human face, but a terrible white blur — and out of this came Margaret's face, which looked at me with awful, hurt eyes, and with that smile — O God, that smile! And Margaret lay dead in England. You know the rest. I believe I was crazed for a time, winding up with a fever. Not till long, long after did I learn the final tragedy in the 'Woman in Red' sensation, coming across it one day, while searching for something else in a file of old papers. There! you have my story."

He rose then and leaned against the mantel for a moment.

"Do you wonder," he asked simply, "that my hair is getting gray?" Dawson's thin hands were twitching nervously.

"But what do you think — " he began.

The Englishmen stopped him authoritatively and turned to go.

"I do not think," he said, "if I can help it — not of that!"

When we were alone we could only sit and look at each other.

"Dawson," I asked finally, "what do *you* think?"

And Dawson smiled a very ghastly smile.

"I do not think," he answered. "I cannot."

We did not have much time to think after that, for the state of Dawson's health became so alarming that I had to telegraph for his mother and sister. Together we pulled him up again, and I, called home by business, left him convalescing in the sunshine.

I had been home barely a month when I received a letter from an old French physician, a resident of Monte Carlo, who had won a pile of bright twenty-franc pieces from me that eventful winter. This is an English version of his letter:

My Dear K.: — Do you remember the Woman in Red and her career that winter you were here? Do you remember the priest who went mad? Do you remember our interest in it all? Mon Dieu! A few days ago I was called to attend that priest, because I have some skill and am very cheap. I found him horribly ill; no hope, but perfectly sane — he had been that way for some days they told me — only not so ill. You know the mind sometimes comes back to a madman shortly before death. His face was yellow, like parchment, and shrivelled like a shrunk olive, with eyes —

ah, Diable, what eyes! He tried all the time to speak, but could not. Finally he signed to me, then fell back, dying miserably. Afterwards, I found this paper beneath his pillow, written by him apparently in his lucid interval. What do you think of it? Mon Dieu, I do not know what to think! Read for yourself.

The paper enclosed, in a pitifully weak hand, read as follows:

Has it been years, or months, or days that I have been here? They will not tell me. I swear that my mind again is clear as I write this — swear it by the Sacred Host and the blessed Mother of Heaven. Yesterday I heard them whisper among themselves that I must die, and I feel that it is so. Before I die I must confess what I saw behind the mask of the Woman in Red, since that was the sight which made me mad, and has kept me here these years, or months or weeks. Perhaps some one coming after me can explain it — some one more versed in the riddles of a weary world.

Before I lifted the mask from the face of this Scarlet Woman that day — whenever it was — I prayed, kneeling on the floor beside her, as one would for the soul of a sinner. I expected to see some disfigurement, hideous enough to be concealed, but nothing more. So it was with comparative calmness that I passed my hand under her bright hair, loosened the metal catch and raised the fatal velvet. Oh, that I could blot out what I saw! That it might not come before my eyes again! At first a white and fearful and shapeless Thing, not human. Then, though the creature was dead before me, there struggled into this a face, so faint I could barely see it, but, have mercy upon me, Merciful One! it was the face of my old mother, with livid, purple lips, looking at me as she did when I, with my boy's hands, crushed out her life, maddened by her cursed tongue. For long years I had kept my deed a secret, but now it cried up to me from this woman — how I know not. The face stayed only long enough to stare at me and burn itself into my brain forever — then it faded away. All this time, how long it is I do not know, I have had before me that fearful, unheard of Thing, through which something has tried to struggle, but, when I have nearly been able to see it, it has turned to a terrible scarlet, and I have laughed and laughed and laughed, I knew not why. With the scarlet stain on my hands and in my brain I make this statement —

Here the writing became illegible and finally stopped abruptly. Below, the doctor had written: "Sacré Bleu! it is enough to make lunatics of us all."

Was the Woman in Red a key-board, played upon by the spirits of the dead — helpless clay, moulded by unseen forces? Had each one who had lifted her mask beheld beneath it the most awful vision of which he could conceive? Would the old Count have seen the face of the little vaudeville artist — bah! you know the story. What would the Baron, what would I, what would *you* have seen?

A Latter-Day Miracle.*

BY FRANK J. STILLMAN.

SUCH a religious awakening had never before been known in the little village of Bounding Meadow, and as a matter of fact, it is doubtful if the spiritual fervor of that brief period will ever find an earthly parallel.

Bounding Meadow's five hundred inhabitants would easily take high rank for sobriety, morality and religious zeal. Though the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian societies were each and all in a most healthy, vigorous and aggressive condition, they had never wasted their energies in interdenominational strife.

In brief, religious effort in Bounding Meadow, just preceding the stirring events to be recounted in this narrative, might truthfully be said to have been altogether above the average in activity and spiritual fruitage. But the generous voluntary offerings of worshippers were a mere pittance beside the golden flood that overwhelmed the church treasuries a few weeks later.

"Like a bolt from heaven's cloudless dome"—the village newspaper said—came an awful warning. Differing from the mysterious handwriting upon the palace walls of the voluptuous Belshazzar, this message required no interpreter; the words were plainly stamped; the meaning clear and pointed; the effect marvellous—appalling!

It was a modern miracle.

. . . . . .

Horace Scott cultivated a farm adjoining the Methodist parsonage, a sort of truck farm, in which the region abounded, supplying distant markets with early vegetables, butter and eggs, and fruits in their seasons.

"Robert," said Mrs. Scott, addressing her thirteen-year-old son,

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on an afternoon in early November, "run out to the barn and gather the eggs; I am going to market."

Robert moodily aroused himself and clumped out to the barn. He made the rounds — crawled under the corn crib where a speckled hen was industriously trying to "set" and ransacked the mangers — and had started for the house, when his eye by chance fell upon the eggs in the basket. Something peculiar attracted his attention, and after a second glance the boy reached in and drew out an egg. It was of ordinary size and shape and color, but upon its glossy shell was something startling.

Robert halted, closely examined the markings, looked about him in a scared, puzzled way, and then legged it for the house at an altogether unusual pace, holding the egg in his hand.

Mrs. Scott had her "things" on awaiting the coming of Robert, and noted his hurried approach, as well as the peculiar expression on his usually impassive countenance. The boy entered, uttered not a word, but placed the egg in his mother's hand. She regarded him with mingled suspicion and perplexity, and then glanced at what she held. Had her gaze fallen upon a cluster of five-carat diamonds the effect could have been hardly more sensational.

"Robert Scott!" she exclaimed, and started as if stricken with a chill, the color fading from her face. "Robert, run for father; he's hoeing in the cabbage patch," and with tones ringing in his ears such as the boy had never before heard from his mother's lips he dashed out of the house.

Mr. Scott came on the run, puzzled beyond expression at the unusual call and the nervous and agitated condition of the boy.

Mrs. Scott, with her younger children, stood in the dining room, and, as the father approached, handed him the egg. He glanced at it a moment, looked up with an interrogation point stamped upon his features, and, while the noisy clock tick-tocked off a dozen seconds, the members of the family gazed into each other's faces in mute despair.

Upon the surface of the egg-shell, standing out boldly in letters that seemed aflame, were the words:

THE JUDGMENT IS AT HAND

"That's the voice of God, Horace," said Mrs. Scott, finally, in a sepulchral tone. "How wonderfully we have been honored and blessed in thus being commissioned to herald the tidings."

The whole family stood awe-struck and silent — except Lizzie, the eldest girl, who actually giggled.

Without further debate Robert and Lizzie were despatched to carry the wondrous news to the neighbors and beg them to come with all speed, while Mr. Scott rushed to the village to warn the people and inform the pastors.

Inside of an hour the Scott residence was overflowing with anxious men and women, eager to see and hear. The egg bearing the dread message was tenderly handled by scores of trembling people, while wailing and lamentation, mingled with rejoicing, filled the air. The letters appeared to have been cut or etched upon the egg-shell as clearly as though engraved by hand, and when exposed against a strong light the writing seemed illuminated, producing a marvellous effect.

Robert, the hero of the hour, regarded as the recipient of a special mark of favor and distinction at the hands of the Almighty, was besieged with interrogations concerning the discovery, and as to whether a voice had been heard. He could only answer that the first sight of the mysterious writing had been granted to him while the egg reposed among others in the basket — he did not know even the nest from which it had been removed.

The suggestion that a monster prayer meeting be held at once found instant and unanimous favor. Church bells clanged and messengers were despatched into the country, appealing to everybody to come to the house of the Lord. Work was dropped and the farmers and their families poured into the village, on foot, on horseback and in lumber wagons.

Meanwhile the townspeople, bearing the egg, had adjourned from the Scott home to the Methodist Church, that being the largest, and all denominational lines having vanished. Within five minutes, however, the building was filled and the people swarmed to the other churches.

Everybody acknowledged the egg to be a direct and divine revelation that the last days of the world were very near at hand. Nobody doubted that. The only anxiety of the zealous was to

warn sinners to prepare for the impending annihilation of the earth and to "flee from the wrath to come."

Such meetings had never been dreamed of. The ministers spoke with words that fairly burned into the souls of their hearers. Tongues of men and women, heretofore diffident, were loosened, and they proclaimed the Gospel and exhorted with an eloquence and fervor that moved the most stony-hearted and obdurate unbelievers, while hundreds of voices mingled in anthems and hymns as they never had before.

All night long the meetings continued. Nobody thought of sleep, or food or business. Excitement developed into delirium. Ordinary avocations were practically forgotten and left to take care of themselves.

As the news spread people continued to push into town. The churches were packed and the village hall was converted into a place of worship, but still men, women and children stood without, clamoring for admittance. Pastors alternated in exhorting, assisted by laymen, and so irresistible was the mighty influence that scarcely a soul in the town or surrounding country successfully withstood it.

Soon the news of the discovery of the miraculous message and reports of the marvellous meetings spread from town to town, and multitudes from many miles around came to see the wonderful egg, all yielding swiftly to the influence of the spell exerted over the public mind. The meetings were continued, gathering strength and increasing in excitement and numbers. People exhorted, sang, prayed and praised, until, worn out, they sought beds for a few hours' sleep, hastily swallowing such food as could be prepared with least effort, and then hurried back to the meeting places.

Then somebody suggested the erection of a monster building, where all might assemble beneath one roof, and contributions were called for. The response was amazing. Money literally poured in upon the building committee, many well-to-do farmers withdrawing their entire balances from the bank and placing the cash at the disposal of the leaders.

However, no funds were required. The lumber dealer, a prominent church member — perhaps feeling at this crisis the need of

heavenly credit — threw open the gates of his yard and begged the committee to avail itself of his stock, while glazed frames, of which the acres of market gardens in the vicinity afforded an unlimited supply, were utilized as windows and in the construction of the roof. Hundreds of wrought-up men freely volunteered their services, and the unparalleled undertaking of completing a tabernacle between daylight and sundown seemed to be possible.

The decision was reached and a location determined upon late Friday afternoon, and at daybreak on Saturday, Nov. 12th, a score of teams began to transfer the lumber yard to the appointed place, where hundreds of stalwart men stood ready to execute the orders of the builders, and, when they were given, worked with desperation born of a conviction that upon the completion of the tabernacle depended their hope of eternal salvation.

The completed structure was two hundred feet square and twenty feet high — a huge box, in fact, roughly built — furnished with plank benches, but grandly lighted through its great glass roof.

The last nail was driven shortly before 10 o'clock Saturday night, and then the exhausted multitude retired to rest, the dedicatory services being postponed till Sunday. Then the zealous felt that the end was, indeed, near at hand, and the weaker brethren trembled at the idea of gathering in a structure planned on a Friday and to be dedicated on the 13th of the month.

Throughout all these moving manifestations Geoffry Jordan, the son of the Methodist minister, remained unmoved and apathetic, and this, too, in spite of the fact that he had always been an interested member of the Sunday school and the Upward League. His mystified, sorrowing father and mother labored vainly, day after day, to arouse the boy to the danger of his position — to the peril of delay.

Finally, Mrs. Jordan, with maternal intuition, divined the existence of a secret in Geoffry's breast that chained him to the world, and that would, if harbored, forever bar him from the presence of his Creator, before whose tribunal all the people of the earth must soon appear — perhaps that very day — and she pleaded in agony with her boy to divulge the cause of his indifference.

For a long time the son steadfastly denied the possession of a secret, but at length broke down beneath the mother's searching questioning, and on Sunday evening, while exciting services were being held in the crowded tabernacle, made a full confession.

Mrs. Jordan was horrified almost to the point of hysteria. Alternately she wept and reviled herself that it should have fallen to her lot to be the mother of such an infamous creature. Then, becoming calmer, she made her way through the dense throng to her husband and whispered a few words to him. His face blanched instantly, and he staggered as though beneath a violent blow.

With heroic effort, however, the minister controlled himself, and, advancing to the center of the rude platform, where a fellow-pastor, wholly unconscious of all earthly surroundings, and with soul aflame, was lifting his voice in exhortation, he gently touched the speaker upon the shoulder. Then, stretching his arm toward the audience, as if to implore closest attention, and raising his eyes heavenward, Rev. Mr. Jordan opened his lips to speak.

A solemn hush fell upon the vast concourse, all eyes followed those of the pastor, and the multitude gazed upward through the great glazed roof.

Then a frantic shout went up. Women shrieked, men groaned and children screamed and wept. The whole heavens were seen to be blazing with darting stars. Flaming meteors flashed before the terrified eyes of the cowering crowd, seemingly as thick as snowflakes in a storm, and cries of horror and prayers for mercy drowned every other sound. The end of the world had surely come, and all who could — animated to the last by human instincts and preferring to make their start for the judgment seat in the open air rather than from beneath the ruins of a lumber pile and the débris of broken cucumber frames — rushed wildly for the ample, barn-like exits.

A few, however, remained in their seats, and among them the village doctor — always regarded suspiciously in the community as too much of a "materialist" — who calmly pushed his way through the group of hysterical clergymen on the platform, and there, having secured the attention of his few auditors, coolly announced that the phenomenon they were witnessing was merely

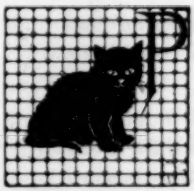
the meteor swarm called by astronomers the Leonids, which return to the earth's path once in about thirty-three years, on or near the 13th of November!

. . . . . .

That was the end of the great Bounding Meadow revival, for which science was primarily responsible, though Geoffry Jordan's hand in the matter was never publicly disclosed, as the father and mother, after the excitement subsided, concluded to keep the secret. They alone — unless Lizzie Scott had a guilty knowledge — knew that the boy, having acquired a smattering of crude chemical lore, had coated one of Farmer Scott's eggs with a thin covering of tallow, and then, with a needle, scratched the momentous words upon the shell. A few hours' immersion in a strong solution of lye completed the "miracle."

The Scientific Circle.*

BY C. C. NEWKIRK.



PROFESSOR THEOPHILUS WARD was a veritable living and walking encyclopedia of facts. He viewed everything that came before him from the only standpoint he knew — that of science. When Ward looked at the pink of a woman's cheek, there is no doubt but that he at once began to calculate how many blood capillaries would be necessary to produce the degree of pink apparent; how deep these capillaries lay from the surface of the skin, and what addition, or subtraction, of heat, cold or emotion would heighten or diminish the glow. In short, Ward would look at a rose without seeing its beauty, but its integral parts he would pick asunder that he might analyze them in his cold, calculating, scientific fashion. He once said he had never encountered a problem in books or in life that he had not been able to solve by scientific deduction.

Physically he was tall and angular. As to the manner in which he moved he was ungainly, even awkward. The students called him "Old Cube Root" when his back was turned, or when he was so absorbed that he could hardly have heard thunder. Ward kept himself clean-shaven, but, in contrast to this, he never brushed his clothes. He had cold and keen gray eyes which invariably looked through great silver-rimmed spectacles. It is needless to add that Ward was never married and probably never will be. He would not know what to do with a wife. Possibly such a thing as marrying has never occurred to him.

In 1891 the professor's too close application at the college in which he has for many years held the chair of natural science, began to tell on him. He became emaciated, and it was apparent that his strength was waning, but Ward took no reckoning. He was advised by his physician and his friends to take a few months'

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rest in a change of scene and air, but he paid no heed. Then his condition became so alarming that a meeting of the college trustees was called and Professor Ward was temporarily discharged from his chair, on full pay, with an appropriation voted to defray the expenses of a three months' vacation, to be spent wherever his fancy might suggest.

Like a philosopher he acquiesced, and the day following started for Mexico, the flora and the mineralogy of which he had long sought an opportunity to study. Theoretically, he was as familiar with Mexico as book knowledge could make him. Professor Ward travelled by rail to New Orleans, from which point he embarked on a passenger and freight vessel bound across the gulf for Vera Cruz. In the railway coaches he sat calmly surveying the panoramic landscape, and on the deck of the vessel, aft, he lounged by the hour, his hat drawn down well over his eyes, which looked vacantly out through those great silver-rimmed spectacles, over the sunlit surface of the tropic gulf.

From Vera Cruz, Ward travelled over the Mexican-Interoceanic Railway northwest to Jalapa. There he tarried two days, picking up all the information he could that would be of value to him on his trip inland and making preparations for the journey. His outfit, which he bought at Jalapa, consisted of a trusty, rather than a beautiful, horse of sufficient weight and strength to carry himself, a repeating rifle, enough provisions for a fortnight, his botanical specimen cases, some drugs and a light mineralogical outfit. Thus equipped Ward left Jalapa and travelled north.

He had enquired carefully as to the possible sources of danger on his intended route, and was assured that he would be perfectly safe from molestation so long as he remained on the main road. But his plans did not permit of adhering to this altogether, and he was especially warned against a belt of very rough and rocky country, some half a mile or more in width, which he would enter after crossing what was known locally as "the divide." Amid the precipitous crags of that desolate region, where an incautious step or a deliberate push would send a man to swift and horrible destruction, many travellers had disappeared, and not by accident alone.

When the Professor had covered perhaps fifteen miles of plain, swamp and wood, the path became narrower and his progress

slower. When, at the end of a three hours' journey, he dismounted to tighten the saddle girth, he discovered the loss of a blanket, which had worked from under him. He remembered having seen it in place only a short time before and believed he would find it not far to the rear. Hitching his animal, he started back afoot. The quest led him a vain quarter of a mile, when he was suddenly diverted by what sounded like the tamp-tamp of a horse's hoofs, around a turn in the route over which he had ridden. There was a thick growth of timber, and he could see nothing. Acting on a first impulse, he stepped a few feet to the side and entered the obscurity of some twining vines. In this covert he waited.

The hoof-beats drew near, and presently a mounted man rode into full view and stopped. The rider was a swarthy Mexican, with flowing black hair and his steed a magnificent roan. Across the pommel of his saddle the Mexican balanced a Winchester, and, leaning forward, he studied the ground over which Ward had ridden. Strapped behind the rider the professor espied the blanket he had lost.

Why had the Mexican halted? Why was he carrying his rifle unslung? Why did he examine the ground ahead?

While Ward was weighing these things over the man on the horse rode forward and passed from sight. The scientist then became concerned for the safety of his own horse and equipment and followed stealthily in the rider's wake, keeping himself under cover and the Mexican in view. Thus the unique procession moved ahead to a point where Ward's horse came into view of the mounted man, who instantly crouched in his saddle, pulled his horse about, and moved noiselessly but more rapidly on the back track. Again Ward stepped aside into concealment and again the Mexican passed him, looking backward frequently. By a détour Ward reached his horse, mounted and proceeded with such apparent unconcern that he did not once look behind him. One would have thought he had forgotten the strange occurrence entirely. On the contrary he was carefully working out its solution, thus:

"The man behind me is a Mexican highwayman — a personage by no means uncommon in this territory. He is at this moment,

and has been for several hours, dogging my trail. He will pursue these tactics until I leave the beaten path and strike off through the rocks across the divide. Then he means to shoot at me from behind, take my horse and effects and throw my body over a precipice! He believes me to be in ignorance of his presence and means to keep me so to the end. He is trailing me as much by broken twigs and earth marks as by sight, and can follow me unerringly and yet remain a mile or more behind. There is to be no open fight. I am not to have an equal chance. It is to be assassination. This move will not be attempted immediately. Fortunate thing I lost the blanket!"

The professor went into camp at sun-down. He chose a spot of considerable area, free from timber and much in the form of a natural clearing. In its centre he boldly built a fire and cooked supper, confident that, until he crossed the divide he would be perfectly safe. Afterward he opened his assortment of drugs and selected from among the many small phials one bearing a red label and containing a thin, colorless liquid, hermetically sealed. Instead of the ordinary stopper the bottle was provided with an automatic injector. This fluid was one of Professor Ward's triumphs in chemical discovery. Its most remarkable property was that on being exposed to the air its expansion into a gas was instant. Moreover, its particles as quickly permeated the atmosphere to an extent proportioned to the amount exposed, rendering senseless and helpless any living thing within its influence, for a period of from fifteen to twenty-five minutes, or until the gas became so widely diffused as to lose its power. In short, its action and effect was much like that of chloroform, except that the sensibilities of man or animal were paralyzed instantly.

The professor next took from his belt a Winchester cartridge, and after some difficulty removed the lead ball, leaving the charge of powder in the shell. He then inserted an air-tight, two-grain gelatine capsule of double strength, full of the mysterious liquid, being careful not to release any of it. This capsule he forced into the shell against the powder. The last step was to place the curious missile in his Winchester so that it would be the next load under the hammer. Ward then lay down, and feigned to sleep, knowing that where he was he was safe from attack, but kept such

perfect virgil as to feel sure that the Mexican could not have passed his camp that night undiscovered.

At daybreak the professor started forward. There was nothing in his demeanor to indicate that he knew himself to be followed. After he had been in the saddle a short time he took from his pocket a small compass, which he carried in his left hand, directing the horse with his right. As he left the camp behind him he increased his pace, pushing the animal as fast as the growth of trees and brush would permit. Any one who could have watched the compass needle as to its bearings with reference to the direction the horse was moving would have concluded Ward to be traveling in a large circle. This was true, but a man following would not have suspected it, first, because of the circle's great circumference, and, second, because the mountains, or other elevations which might disclose the fact, were, at the point chosen by the professor, concealed by forests. The scientist's purpose was now apparent. He had adopted a curious strategy to gain a position to the rear of the Mexican without the latter suspecting it.

An hour's riding brought Ward to the point where he had started on his circular route, and so accurate were his calculations that he did not vary but a few feet from the trail. Dismounting, he carefully examined the ground, and as he climbed back into the saddle smiled grimly, something rare for Ward. The Mexican was ahead. Ward had found the hoof-marks of the roan. Again the scientist proceeded rapidly, yet with extreme caution. As he bent forward in the saddle and peered ahead through the silver-rimmed spectacles, he presented a most grotesque appearance. He had thus traveled in the Mexican's wake more than a mile. His usually imperturbable nature was keyed up to a snapping tension, not so much through fear as in anticipation of a new experiment. Suddenly he stopped abruptly and slipped from his horse. Leading the animal from sight he hastily tied it. Then he stole forward a short distance and dropped on one knee. About fifty yards ahead of him leisurely rode the Mexican. Quickly Ward brought his Winchester into position until the muzzle hung steadily and the broad back of the Mexican filled the sights on the barrel. Then the scientist pressed the trigger and jumped to his feet.

Almost simultaneously with the report of the rifle the roan

and its rider sank to the ground. The elated Ward started to run forward, but as he advanced was seized with a feeling of giddiness and, realizing that he was approaching the sphere permeated by the powerful gas, he beat a hasty retreat. Gradually the power of the anæsthetic became so diffused as to allow him to go forward a second time. The unconscious Mexican lay with one leg pinned under his horse's body. Ward pulled him free, but only to bind him securely with a part of his own trappings. But a few minutes passed before the highwayman opened his eyes. When they met Ward's they flashed in terrible hate and as the man made an effort to rise he discovered, for the first time, that he was a helpless prisoner.

Ward nearly lost his equanimity at the outcome of affairs and at the success of his experiment. Undoing the prisoner's feet, but leaving his arms pinioned, Ward managed to lift him astride the roan and lash the highwayman's feet together under the horse's belly. Five hours later the exultant Ward entered Jalapa astride his own horse and leading behind him the roan on which sat the Mexican, tied to its back, outwitted and humiliated. The prisoner was turned over to the authorities and proved to be a notorious bandit, who for many months had terrorized the Vera Cruz country. Ward, having proved himself able to cope with all the dangers of the region, at once returned and systematically gathered all his desired specimens, and then departed for Yucatan, where the remainder of his vacation was pleasantly, safely and profitably spent.

Against the wall in the scientist's library rests a rifle. It is silver mounted and beautifully carved, with its rich ebony stock artistically inlaid with curious designs in ivory. Ward prizes it, not so much because it was once the property of a man who would have taken his life in a far-away country, but because it is a souvenir of a problem which his science solved.

Missouri.*

BY A. W. WHITEHOUSE.

N the old days of the open range a cowhand found lots of practice, and had to be pretty accurate at all kinds of throwing to hold his job. But now that ranches are fenced in, and stock is worked mainly in corrals and chutes, there is no great need for a superlative performer, and the star roper has either been with a Wild West Show, and is consequently fit for a good day's work about once a month, or belongs to that numerous band of young gentlemen who have no brand of their own, ride the range for all there is in it, and live comfortably according to their lights. These worthies turn up suddenly in the corrals on branding day — usually hailing from Texas or British territory — volunteer their help, do bewildering work, and just as their employer begins to congratulate himself upon having secured a priceless treasure, disappear as suddenly as they came.

Their ultimate fate may sometimes be guessed at. For instance, a few weeks after the lynching of Cattle Kate on the Sweetwater had put the whole country in an uproar, twenty-seven of them were found strung up a little farther to the north.

One summer Bar H ranch was very short of hands, and it was a case of first come, first served; accordingly when a very ragged Ishmael turned up on foot, having evidently been making his way along the ties, he was promptly engaged, and set to odd jobs about the place. The boys called him Missouri; he never owned to any other name, and as Missouri was duly entered on the books. Born and bred, as he said, a farmhand, he was terribly afraid of the vicious broncos, and it immediately became the ambition of the cow outfit to get him on the top of a genuine twister.

The opportunity soon came. One of Missouri's tasks was to

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bring up the milk cows in the evening, and at his own request he had been given a solemn old workhorse for the purpose, who walked sedately down the field, turned the cows and walked even more sedately home. One afternoon there was a press of work, and the old horse was still out with a wagon. The boys had an excellent substitute all ready. There in the corral stood old Baldy, a big blazed-faced bay, as gentle as a lamb.

"Are you sure he won't buck?" timidly queried Missouri.

"Not he; the Boss's sister used to ride him right along till he got too slow for her."

In a bungling way Missouri saddled and bridled the horse, who stood gently nosing him. Then, remarking that, as it was getting late and the horse was slow, he might have to push him along, he called for a pair of spurs.

"Never wore 'em before," he added, as he buckled them on, upside down, and climbed clumsily into the saddle. The delicious moment for which Alfred Gordon's cowboys had long been waiting, had arrived.

"Git up!"

Old Baldy stood like a rock, but his ears went back, the white of the eyes began to show, and from the loins to the withers there appeared an ominous arch.

"Oh Lord! What's he going to do," exclaimed Missouri, very cautiously and in fear and trembling, moving his heels toward the flank.

The bystanders fell back.

Like a flash Baldy went into the air; his head disappeared between his forelegs, and when he landed he had completely faced about.

And where was Missouri?

There, firmly in the saddle he sat, just as though nothing had happened, complaisantly leaning forward, fingering the headgear. The next moment he had slipped off the bridle, thrown his feet out of the stirrups, clapped both spurs firmly on the horse's shoulders and, waving his hat, was shouting:

"Git up, you blaze-faced son of a gun, I've slept on worse buckers than you."

Then followed a riding exhibition that was a rare treat to the

expert onlookers. Baldy changed ends, bucked straight ahead and hard; he tried walking along quietly and then, after three buck jumps in quick succession, shook himself, got down on his knees and worried the ground, but all to no avail. Missouri sat there as happy as a king, slapping him gently and guiding him with his hat.

That's how the farmhand came to be promoted from choreboy to cowhand, and he proved the best that had ever worked for the Bar H outfit. Where he had learned his craft he would never tell, but the "farmhand" brought in cows that had not been seen for years, roped and dragged out calves in the corral quicker than two gangs could wrestle and brand them, and topped off the meanest of the ponies for all the others. At times Gordon thought he could detect flashes of a good education, a play, perhaps, on the Latin meaning of a word, but whenever he tried to follow up the lead, the cowhand relapsed into the sullen ignorance of the plainsman.

When slack times came again Missouri was set to breaking some thorough-bred colts to saddle, for, as every ranchman knows, a clean bred horse with cowboy manners makes a priceless mount. It was while he was putting the finishing touches to the education of a fine chestnut gelding, Granger (which Gordon meant to present to Alice Winterburn, his sister's guest, who was to be the future Mrs. Gordon), that he became the hero of a second adventure.

Gordon and his sweetheart had started out for a cross-country ride, and Missouri was bidden to accompany them, to show off Granger's paces. Their course lay through a stretch of vacant pasture land, and the cowboy, with the gentlemanly instinct which so often surprised his employer, soon dropped almost a mile to the rear of the absorbed young couple.

Suddenly Alice laid her hand on Gordon's arm, and pointing to a bluff half a mile distant, exclaimed:

"What a magnificent horse!"

There, silhouetted as black as night against the skyline, stood Cerberus, one of the grandest looking stallions on the continent. Gordon instantly realized that unless they could draw away without attracting his attention, there was every prospect of a dangerous encounter, for the animal was savage and, having escaped from his paddock, was roaming in turbulent mood.

Without quickening the pace sufficiently to disturb the stallion, Gordon changed the direction toward the nearest gate. But Cerberus caught sight of them, and began trotting up and down, shrilly neighing and pawing the ground. Would he give chase, or be satisfied with the retreat of the objects of his rage? By the time they had put a quarter of a mile between them and the furious animal, he had made up his mind, and clattered down the bluff.

"Now, Alice," urged her companion, "ride for your life! The gate is two miles off in that direction, and all good going. I will ride behind and bother him if he catches up!"

Gordon carried nothing more formidable than a light riding whip, and was soon left far behind the fleeing girl, while the thundering of the black stallion's hoofs came nearer and nearer.

Suddenly his horse swerved and squealed as the teeth of Cerberus met in his flank. The next instant Gordon saw a pair of hoofs in close proximity to his shoulder. He raised his whip in defense, but the angry horse, circling twice around his owner without again attacking, swung off in swift pursuit of Alice. Gordon's horse was no match for the other in speed, and his rider, realizing the peril of his sweetheart, now urged his animal with spur and whip with a desperation born of hopelessness.

On the fierce chase swept toward the distant gate. Alice's pony, who neatly avoided the vicious kicks and lunges of the attacking stallion as the latter overtook him, was tiring under the terrible pace, and Gordon's heart sickened as Cerberus bit fiercely at the frightened girl, but beat again as he saw that the infuriated animal had torn off only a piece of her riding skirt, which he stopped for a moment to worry, dog fashion.

Still far in the rear, straining every nerve and muscle to catch up, he heard again the pounding of hoofs behind him, and the next instant Missouri dashed past, mounted on Granger. Bareheaded, with his hat flapping on his shoulders, his loose shirt and the fringe on his chaparajeros rippling in the wind, he sat erect as a statue, gracefully swinging his lariat round his head. Granger, urged to his utmost, quickly closed upon the leaders at every stride. When almost within lassoing distance, the great stallion began circling around the flagging pony, landing with his heels on its off side and nearly unseating Alice.

Then Gordon saw what he will never see again. Missouri dashed between the circling stallion and the pony, and, without slackening his mad gallop, leaned forward and cast the noose of his lariat fairly about both fore feet of the great black horse. In an instant he had wound the free end of the lasso around the saddle horn, Granger was thrown back upon his haunches, and the feet of Cerberus were pulled from under him.

When Gordon reached the fallen animal, Missouri already had him so securely hog-tied that he could not possibly rise. As if to anticipate any words of thanks, he called out:

"What you want me to do with this here critter? Can't turn him loose again, and I allow I couldn't lead him to the ranch — not off Granger — he might eat me up!"

Here Alice reined alongside of Gordon and whispered a suggestion that caused a surprised face — for Cerberus had proved a good investment for his owner — but in the exuberance of his joy at his sweetheart's escape he called out to Missouri:

"Does Granger lead pretty well?"

"First-class."

"Then take off his saddle and bridle and give him to me on the lariat. Put your rig on the black fellow and ride him home — he's your horse — but for Heaven's sake ride clear of us."

Missouri sparkled all over, but all he said was:

"Well — you're the boss."

Over a bottle and a pipe Gordon had a talk that evening with his brilliant farmhand, and tried to draw him out, but with little success. About all Missouri would say was:

"I was born and bred civilized; I didn't always talk cowboy talk; but the past won't bear looking into."

Cerberus proved a demoralizing present. Quickly transformed, under his new owner's skilful hands, from a savage sultan to a docile wonder, his great speed earned more money than was good for the cowboy's never remarkable steadiness. One day he asked Gordon for his check, adding that he was going to take a holiday of a few weeks. He never returned to the Bar H ranch.

When next he was seen in Gordon's local town it was as a prisoner, and his case a very bad one, nearly every one said. He had been surprised by the owner while skinning a stolen steer,

and had shot his way to temporary freedom, killing one man. Later he had surrendered to the sheriff without resistance.

Alfred Gordon, the last man to sympathize with cattle thieves, interested himself in the case at once, and soon became convinced that the man was the victim of a conspiracy, so far at least as the killing was concerned, and that it was done in self-defence.

On the Sunday before the day set for the trial, Gordon started to visit Missouri in the county jail, taking him the newspapers of the day. Now, besides the county buildings, the town possessed a half-finished — but wholly mortgaged — Episcopal Cathedral, and therefore a Bishop, a great and good man, widely known, and accordingly it was not uncommon for even very celebrated ecclesiastics to break their journey there, and preach a Sunday sermon.

So it happened that one of the very papers which Gordon was taking to Missouri contained an item stating that services at the Cathedral that day would be conducted by the Rev. Henry E. Parker, whom it went on to eulogize as the "Young Chrysostom" from England, educated at Granchester School and Christchurch College, Oxford. And it also happened that when he reached the jail he found Canon Parker there before him, on the very pious mission of visiting the prisoners and offering them such spiritual consolation as they could be persuaded to accept.

Not very rigid in his notions of jail discipline, the sheriff ushered Gordon directly into the cell of Missouri, where the sleek clergyman was already seated, talking unctuously to the cowboy, who sat grimly silent, with his piercing gaze fixed upon the face of the "Young Chrysostom." It was a handsome, intellectual face, but not a pleasing one to Gordon. He was about to withdraw, when Missouri stopped him with a word:

"Wait, Mr. Gordon. I want you to know Canon Parker, who has been so good as to come to pray for me and talk to me in parables. Now I am going to tell him a little parable that will show him just why I am here, and not, perhaps, in holy orders, as he is, and I want you to be a witness.

"Mr. Parker, your name was familiar to me from the first, and I knew you the instant you entered. You may remember mine before I am through, but I shall ask you not to repeat it, as I still have respectable relatives living.

"When I was a little chap of fourteen, at Granchester, you were many years older, and a prefect of the school. You probably thought your juniors did not see your real character and watch your doings, but they did so, and very sharply. My special chum was a dreamer, whom I will call Dreams. In the fervor and ecstacy attending our preparation for confirmation, Dreams and I determined to do some great deed for the Lord. We well could surmise the fate of three young girls of the place — tradesmen's daughters — after making your acquaintance. We had had abundant proof that you were a man without morals and without a conscience; what better deed could we do than remove you — you, with your great beauty and high gifts, consecrated to evil?

"We determined to do it, and made our plans for its execution and our escape — with a cash capital of four pounds, ten and six, a chart of the Nile and a diagram for a canoe.

"One summer Saint's day we arranged to get special Early Leave Out, crawl down and knock you on the head with a mouse digger while you slept. Don't you think the little geological hammer would have done the job?

"I was to be the executioner, and had crept stealthily to your door. But it was ordered otherwise. Two other boys had overheard our plans, and by their intervention we were foiled. Rumors reached the authorities and we were sacked at the end of the term, without characters, without a future in England — with all our prospects in life destroyed. So we carried out our boyish dream of adventure abroad. Whether you improved the opportunity for reform which Providence surely granted, you best know; but if not, rather than be in your place, I would prefer this hole.

"Now go, Mr. Parker; I felt compelled to tell you this — but I never wish to set eyes on you again."

And, looking at the two, Gordon felt that he would rather be the reckless cowboy than the golden-tongued canon from beyond the sea.

On Monday it became very clear to Missouri's friend that he would not stand much chance at a trial, though convinced of his innocence. Witnesses in a cattle case are rarely reliable. So Gordon, a man of influence in the locality, went to the sheriff. What passed between them is not a matter of record.

But developments are very well told in an extract from the local paper:

WOULD-BE LYNCHERS DISAPPOINTED!

AN ARMED PARTY BREAKS INTO THE JAIL AND CARRIES OFF THE WRONG MAN!

The ugly feelings aroused by the brutal murders of the past week culminated last night. As has been well known, Joe Lawton's life has hung upon a thread ever since he cruelly tortured and killed his wife and child. Last night that thread was nearly snapped. An armed party of from twelve to fifteen masked men rode up and forced an entrance to the jail. The sheriff, powerless to resist, did his best. He turned off the electric light, and being asked for the number of Lawton's cell, pluckily told the marauders to find it for themselves. Stumbling through the corridor in the darkness, they quickly broke open a door — No. 15 — and hauling out the inmate, enveloped him in sacks and wheeled him off to destruction in a hack. Arrived at a convenient telegraph pole, a little south of the city, they proceeded to their grisly work.

As a matter of fact, Lawton was confined in No. 14, and their prisoner, divested of the sackcloth, proved to be none other than the redoubtable cowboy and cattle thief who has passed in this section by the name of Missouri. Your reporter hung on to the outskirts of the crowd, and though the men were so well disguised as to make recognition impossible, he distinctly heard the following words:

"Well, boys, we ain't got no quarrel with Missouri?"

"Nope."

"And we can't very well go back with him to the jail, and be liable to be took ourselves?"

"Nope."

"Well, then, Missouri, hit the trail!"

It is a curious coincidence that Cerberus was tied to the next telegraph pole but one.

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